



MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Legislative Fiscal Division

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Legislative Fiscal Analyst
CLAYTON SCHENCK

October 24, 2005

Darlene Staffeldt, State Librarian
P.O. Box 201800
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Ms. Staffeldt:

As part of its oversight responsibilities the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) has been receiving and reviewing updates on activities of and progress by a number of state functions. As a part of this ongoing effort, the LFC is requesting an update on the published goals and objectives (attached) for the following function of your agency: **NRIS**

The committee would like an informal response that addresses how well you are meeting each of the stated goals and objectives. Be specific where you can. A standard form is attached for your convenience.

Please provide your response by November 18, 2005, which you may send via email to Diane McDuffie at dimcduffie@mt.gov. Your response will be forwarded to the members of the committee, and a discussion will be considered for inclusion at the next LFC meeting.

We appreciate your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Taryn Purdy at tpurdy@mt.gov or at 5383.

Sincerely,

Clayton Schenck

cc: Jim Hill

Legislative Finance Committee Update on Goals and Objectives

Agency: Montana State Library

Function: NRIS

Agency Contact: Jim Hill

LFD Contact: Marilyn Daumiller

Respond By Date: November 18, 2005

Email to: Diane McDuffie, dimcduffie@mt.gov

Please discuss how well are you meeting each of the published goals and objectives (attached) for the listed function(s) for the current fiscal year. Be as specific in your response as possible. For example, what (if anything) are you measuring to determine accomplishments? Are you progressing towards goals? Have you suffered any setbacks or encountered any particular challenges? How can the legislature assist you?

Summary of NRIS Progress:

The Natural Resource Information System continues to deliver essential services to Montana's public and private sectors by providing readily available, single-point access to vast amounts of geospatial data and other natural resource information. Demand for NRIS services and use of NRIS information resources continue to grow and NRIS continues to be valued as a highly productive and cost-effective program of state government. A dedicated and highly talented staff has continued, in the face of significant funding limitations, to build data holdings and expand access to information via the web. Additional staff are necessary to improve information transfer from producer agencies, maintain and upgrade our web-based information access tools, and support our IT infrastructure. Maintaining the outstanding services that NRIS is known for will require a renewed commitment to effectively funding this highly successful program.

Natural Resource Information System (NRIS)

NRIS is dedicated to providing Montanans with comprehensive and accurate information that is essential to managing our natural resources. NRIS staff assembles this information from diverse sources, use the best available technologies to deliver it efficiently, and provides exceptional customer support.

Issue 1: Resource managers, scientists, policy makers, businesses and citizens must have access to comprehensive, current and accurate information relating to Montana's natural resources to make sound decisions.

Needs Assessment Summary: Government agencies that produce data often do not have a mandate to disseminate such data widely or have limited resources for dissemination. In addition, information is often broadly scattered among state and federal agencies, other institutions, and individuals, and some types of information are incomplete or not yet assembled. One of NRIS's mandates is to centrally collect and coordinate the dissemination of natural resource information.

Goal #23: To fulfill its mandate to be the source for natural resource information in Montana, NRIS must acquire, integrate, maintain, and document natural resource data and information needed for understanding, managing and utilizing Montana's natural resources, and environment.

LSTA Purpose: No LSTA funds are used for NRIS.

Key Output Targets:

1. Increase the quantity and quality of data available through the NRIS clearinghouse. Identify and incorporate high priority datasets identified through the biennial survey and other inputs, with a goal of acquiring three of the top priority datasets identified in the Data Plan each year.

NRIS continues to make significant progress in acquiring or improving the quantity and quality of datasets that it manages and provides to users. Recent accomplishments include:

- ***Completed the statewide coverage of digital orthophotos; added high resolution color photography for many urban areas; preparing to add statewide NAIP color and color infrared photography;***
- ***Successfully merged the DofA cadastral data with the Department of Revenue CAMA data and began serving the combined set;***
- ***Worked with USFS and NRCS to delineate '6th code' subwatersheds for Montana;***
- ***Updated entire NRCS SSURGO soil data set;***
- ***Augmented existing 100k resolution hydrography with 24k high resolution data.***

- **Recently added distribution data for 29 wildlife species to NHP statewide occurrence database, including Black-tailed prairie dog, greater sage grouse, and 27 other bird species not previously mapped.**
- **Added quality assessment ranks to 2800 plant Species of Concern records.**
- **Developed new Bird Observation Database to facilitate gathering and managing precise data on bird distribution in Montana, and imported over 9000 observation records.**
- **Added many new datasets that became available from various data producers during the period (e.g. DEQ remediation sites, DNRC water-rights data, and Montana Historical Society SHPO data.)**

Challenge: Understaffing has limited NRIS' ability to be pro-active in acquiring new data – i.e., depending heavily on data producers to initiate provision of data rather than identifying data needs and actively finding and obtaining new or updated data. Additional capacity is needed to identify and obtain new data that becomes available, so users can be provided with access to the broadest range of existing data resources.

2. Formalize relationships with data producers/data providers to improve the timeliness of data in the clearinghouse. Establish written agreements with data producers/providers for ongoing exchange/support of data. Refresh the data in the clearinghouse on the schedule identified in the Data Plan.

NRIS continues to improve the timeliness of the data in the clearinghouse. Changes in the underlying technology have enabled us to automate the updating for process for many dynamic datasets. For example, DNRC water rights data and DEQ remediation site data are refreshed weekly; Department of Administration cadastral data are refreshed monthly; Bureau of Mines and Geology well data are refreshed quarterly.

Challenge: Most of the data in the NRIS collection require significant staff effort to update. Natural Heritage Program data, in particular, requires detailed review and processing by staff specialists. For these datasets, staffing limitations are a significant impediment to keeping datasets current with available information.

3. Properly document all data in the clearinghouse. Ensure that appropriate metadata records accompany all new datasets; develop metadata records for twelve existing datasets per year until all datasets are properly documented.

NRIS policy requiring that new datasets be properly documented when accepted into the clearinghouse has all but eliminated the problem of missing metadata for datasets added to NRIS.

Challenge: Metadata for older, existing datasets is researched and developed on an as-needed basis, since NRIS does not have the staff resources to systematically research and fully document older datasets. With current staffing levels, it will not be possible to meet the stated goal of developing metadata records for twelve existing datasets per year, toward the goal of documenting all such datasets .

4. Add value to clearinghouse datasets through the integration of these data in a common geodatabase structure, eliminating duplicate datasets, increasing the accuracy of holding information, or improving the link between the spatial representation of a dataset and associated attribute data. Document six occurrences each year where incorporation into the NRIS clearinghouse results in significant benefit.

Montana continues to reap major benefits from its investment in NRIS. The founding concept of NRIS – that data should be developed just once and made broadly available through a single point of contact – continues to produce great rewards and cost savings for both government and the private sector.

5. Identify key data gaps and implement strategies to enhance data completeness by direct action (especially related to biological resources) or by supporting and assisting the efforts of others.

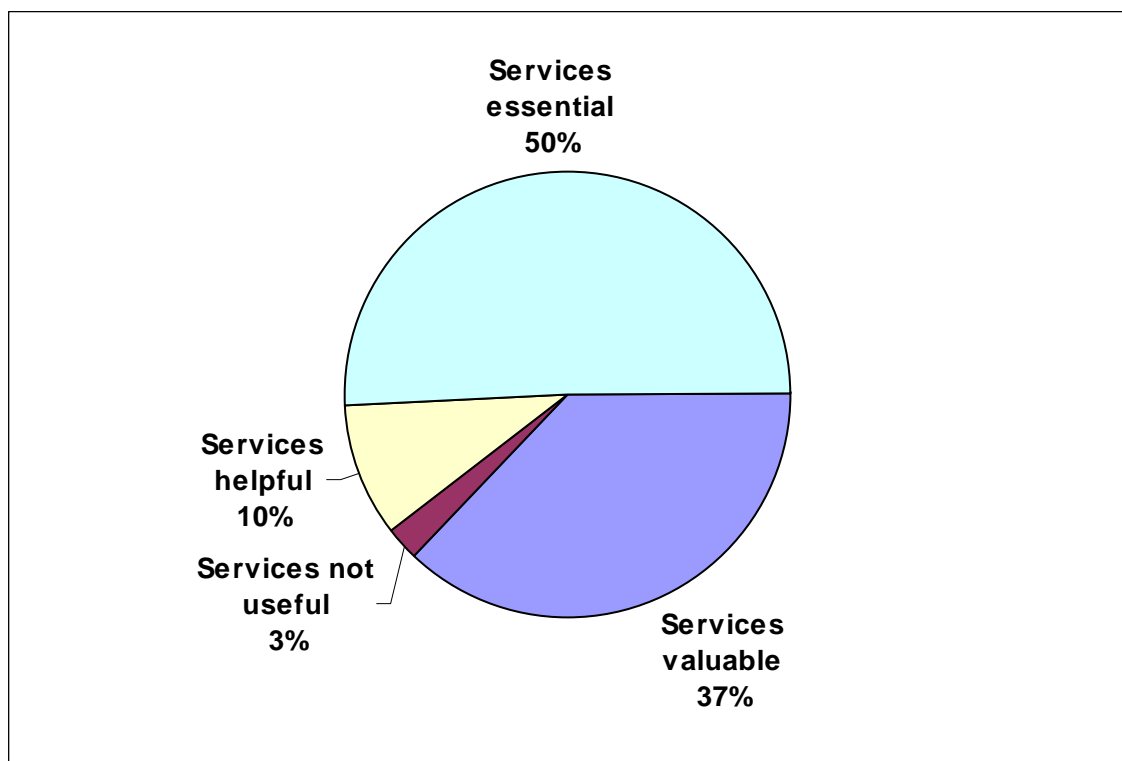
NRIS continues to play a primary role in supporting data creation and maintenance. The Natural Heritage Program coordinates extensively with other agencies to identify data gaps and develop strategies to fill them, including field data collection. However, because core funding is limited, most data development and enhancement must be paid through external contracts with partners, which limits the focus and progress of those efforts.

Key Outcome Targets:

1. State and local government agency users report that the information available through NRIS has improved their capability to make program, policy or management decisions relating to agency mandates, that access to data through NRIS has improved the utility of their own data for in-house use, and that access to data through NRIS has reduced their costs.

2. Montana businesses report that ease of access to Montana natural resource information has supported their ability to develop, maintain, or increase business capacity, has made their business more efficient, and has improved their ability to meet the requirements of regulatory agencies.
3. Montana citizens report that access to information produced by state agencies has increased their knowledge of Montana's natural resources, has enabled them to make better decisions regarding natural resource issues, has helped them effectively participate in and understand state agency decisions and actions regarding natural resource issues, and has provided them information they have effectively used for personal business, recreational, or other use.
4. Visitors (and potential visitors) to Montana report that they have used information provided by NRIS or through other agencies using NRIS data access tools to help them plan their visits and enhanced their enjoyment and use of recreational opportunities related to Montana's natural resources.

Consolidated responses from all use sectors from an October 2003 web survey to a survey question which asked, "Please rate the value of NRIS services to your agency, business or personal needs." provides the following chart.



A more detailed 2005 survey of Natural Heritage Program users found the following:

- *Nearly 20% of responding users utilize NHP services on a daily or weekly basis, and over 50% utilize those services at least monthly.*
- *Over 90% of users rated NHP web-based services as Very Good or Good.*

Programs:

Improve coordination and outreach. Obtain/maintain knowledge of natural resource data need and availability by attending meetings relating to natural resource issues, serving on working groups of agencies and organizations involved in natural resource issues, and maintaining involvement in the GIS community. Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS staff make key contributions to a variety of committees and working groups (e.g., the Governor's Drought Advisory Committee and DEQ Wetland Coordinating Council). NRIS also continues to play a primary role in the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure, through the Montana Land Information Advisory Council (MLIAC), chairing four Implementation Teams (elevation, orthoimagery, hydrography, and hydrologic units). NRIS staff regularly provide technical support to other agencies regarding data development and management.

Challenge: It is increasingly difficult for NRIS staff to respond to the growing demand for involvement in various groups and initiatives to promote coordination among the diverse agencies involved in data creation and maintenance.

Focus on data inventory. Conduct/maintain a comprehensive data inventory, including new data of potential value to clearinghouse users. Conduct a biennial survey of state natural resource agencies to identify datasets appropriate for inclusion in the clearinghouse. Time Frame: Current holdings - September 30, 2002, Biennial survey - ongoing.

NRIS staff completed and maintain a comprehensive Data Inventory of over 1000 data layers representing statewide, regional, and special project data, including 300 datasets that are critical to user needs on a ongoing basis.

Develop a data plan for acquiring, managing and serving data of great value to users.

Develop/maintain a strategic data plan that:

Sets forth minimum standards for inclusion in the clearinghouse identifies available datasets appropriation for inclusion in the NRIS clearinghouse

Identifies data gaps and strategies to address them;

Sets forth priorities and schedules for importing/updating clearinghouse data;

Identifies consolidation/optimization opportunities;

Identifies appropriation data delivery mechanisms.

Time Frame: June 30, 2002.

The NRIS data plan is based on the GIS Data Inventory (discussed above), which documents data in the collection, its completion status, metadata status, and key information on how data is acquired, managed and served. The Natural Heritage Program also maintains a data development plan in consultation with major partner agencies and user groups.

Continue to acquire data and update existing data. Time Frame: Ongoing. ***See response above.***

Improve data documentation. Develop/maintain metadata records for all data included in the clearinghouse. ***See metadata status above.***

Provide limited training and support to state agency personnel tasked with development of metadata for agency datasets.

With discontinuation of support from the Department of Administration to provide metadata training and coordination services, NRIS no longer provides a metadata outreach & assistance program. NRIS staff are available to assist agencies in the creation of metadata as time and resources permit.

Evaluate the addition of records to OCLC's World Cat and the use of Dublin Core. Time Frame: Ongoing.

Montana State Library staff have begun evaluating NRIS datasets, maps, and data access applications to evaluate potential inclusion in standard library catalog systems. It is unclear whether this would enhance access to many NRIS resources, since GIS and IT professionals access geospatial data through other means. However, as MSL strives to make these datasets useful and available to non-IT professionals, a broader set of discovery and access tools will be necessary.

Continue to develop data. Encourage development/refinement of priority datasets (data champion); manage the development/refinement of orphan datasets (data custodian for those datasets not the responsibility of other agencies). Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS staff serve on MLIAC Implementation teams for the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure and chair four of those teams. NRIS recently became the custodian of the Montana portion of the National Hydrography Dataset.

Issue 2: To be effectively used, natural resource data must be easily located, provided in common formats that serve user needs, associated with related data, and made available on demand when and where needed; data access, display and analysis tools must be readily available and easily understood. The inability to quickly locate, obtain and effectively utilize existing data may result in poor decision-making due to lack of adequate data, or increased costs and delays associated with duplication of data collection efforts.

Needs Assessment Summary: Locating and obtaining high quality natural resource information in a form that can be readily utilized is difficult, as multiple agencies use various formats to manage data. NRIS must validate, control the quality of, and standardize data to ensure consistency, accuracy, and maximum utility. In addition, the ability of NRIS clearinghouse users to find and effectively utilize such data varies from novice to expert. Various abilities of user require that NRIS present information in formats easily accessible to a broad range of users.

Goal #24: A broad range of user groups can easily locate data in effective formats. Users find that this information is augmented with related datasets to increase their value. Potential NRIS users are well informed of information available through the clearinghouse and trained in the use of NRIS tools. Staff assistance is available when needed to assist users in locating and utilizing data.

LSTA Purpose: No LSTA funds are used for NRIS.

Key Output Targets:

1. Increase automated data access, with a goal of a 10 % increase in Web hits and megabytes downloaded each year.

We continue to emphasize improving access to NRIS information via the web. User sessions on the web have increased to the point where NRIS serves more users each day via the web than it does in a year through staff assisted information requests.

Sept. Web Visits: 33,978

Average Number of Visitor Sessions per day on Weekdays: 3,401

Oct. Web Visits: 36,115

Average Number of Visitor Sessions per day on Weekdays: 3,754

2. Improve the reliability of NRIS data delivery mechanisms, with particular focus on providing Internet access in response to user needs as identified in the biannual survey.

NRIS continues to make improvements to its Web-based services infrastructure, recently adding automated failover protection to its database and web mapping environment, increasing reliance on robust electronic storage, and improving its tape backup capabilities. 94% of respondents to the NHP user survey reported reliability to be Very Good or Good.

3. Provide staff-assisted access to data for users not able to obtain data through automated means, with a goal of responding to an estimated 2000 user requests per year.

NRIS users continue depend on staff assistance for information access, and the number of mediated information requests appears to be steady or growing, even with continued development of Web resources.

Staff assistance requests during FY05 – 1,767

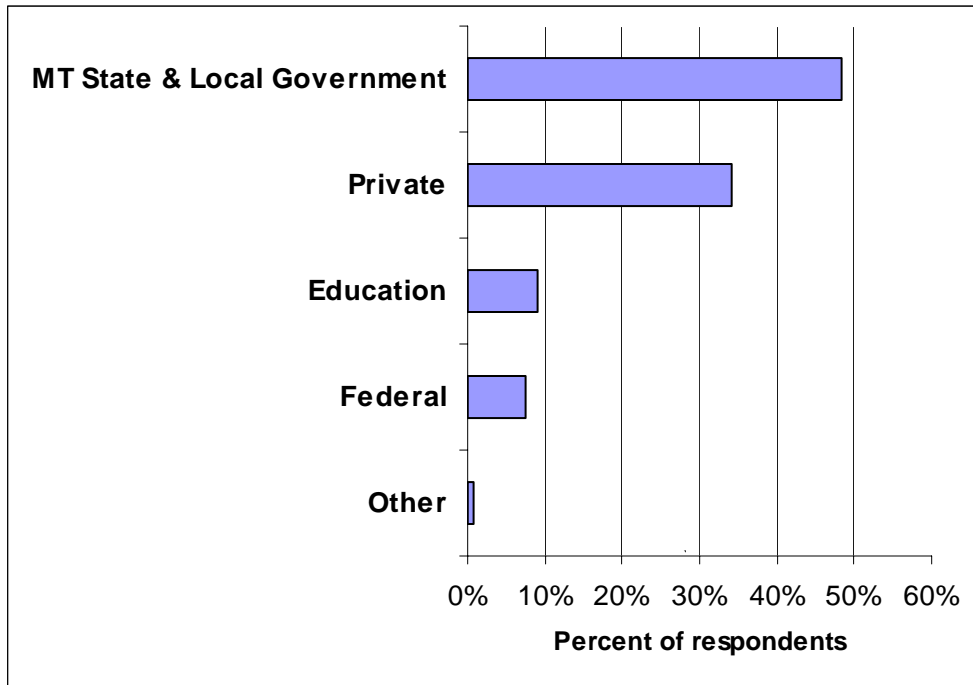
Staff assistance requests 1st quarter FY06 - 407

Challenge: Requests for staff assistance demand a significant amount of NRIS staff resources, and with current staffing limitations, this takes away from staff time that is essential for processing, updating and maintaining key datasets that users require.

Key Outcome Targets:

1. Users report that the data access, display, and interpretation tools available through NRIS enable them to obtain maps, data summaries, and other products without having to own or become knowledgeable of specialized hardware and software, saving them time and money.
2. The range of user groups served by NRIS continues to broaden. In addition to an increase in government agency users, Montana businesses and citizens find and utilize data served through the NRIS clearinghouse and other catalogs.

Respondents to the October 2003 web survey represented the following sectors:



Programs:

Continue and improve efforts to educate and inform. Provide information about NRIS to all user groups using news releases, feature stories, newsletter articles, conference presentations, and seminars. Survey users biannually on the utility of NRIS data access methods and tools and on their particular data access requirements. Provide training and evaluate its effectiveness. Utilize a combination of news releases (12/year), feature stories (2/year), newsletter articles (12/year), conference presentations (6/year), seminars (2/year), and email to advise users and potential users of NRIS products and services, new data or data access tools, and significant changes to the NRIS clearinghouse. Time Frame: Ongoing.

We have achieved some success in advising potential users of NRIS services through most of these media, and NRIS contributes to the salary of the State Library's marketing and communications coordinator, who is helping with this effort. However, current staffing has been inadequate to effectively fulfill this important function.

Continue to offer mediated services: Maintain mechanisms to receive user requests via phone, email, and web-based request log. Respond to user requests as appropriate. Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS provides a web utility for users to submit requests, as well as a phone-based request service to ensure that all users have ready access to NRIS resources. All requests are also tracked through a request log system. See mediated services statistics above.

Challenge: *As stated above, staff-mediated requests require a significant amount of staff time, and under current staffing constraints, this competes with staff time needed for processing, updating and maintaining key datasets needed by agencies and other users, and developing the tools necessary for users to find and use these resources via the Web.*

Develop and maintain website development. Develop and maintain NRIS website to provide the means to serve data to all user groups. Continually refine the organization and presentation of clearinghouse data to take advantage of improved technology to directly address the identified needs of major user groups and to respond to feedback. Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS recently redesigned web pages for GIS and NHP data to provide more effective search and browse capabilities. A redesign and enhancement of the broader MSL and NRIS websites is currently underway.

Challenge: *Although the web is our primary means of information dissemination – and by far the most efficient means of delivering NRIS resources and services to users, we do not have the web programming capacity to fully develop these tools, and have had to rely on revenue from interagency agreements for web application development to maintain staff programming capabilities. Additional web application development resources will be critical to broader and more effective access to data.*

Improve data access. Develop/maintain effective search mechanisms to enable users to quickly locate data available through the NRIS clearinghouse. Maintain the Montana State Library FGDC clearinghouse node and ensure that NRIS data are fully represented. Input to the development of nationally supported information search mechanisms such as the Global Information Location System (GILS). Ensure that state government indexing systems properly index NRIS data holdings. Evaluate the addition of records to OCLC's World Cat and the use of Dublin Core. Time Frame: Ongoing.

See comments above regarding web programming needs. Metadata services are being improved through a recent Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) grant to improve our ability of our users to use metadata to locate the data they need. Montana State Library staff are evaluating the applicability for Montana of national methods for indexing geospatial data within library catalogs.

Improve and maintain data dissemination. Improve/maintain access to data for all user groups by providing multiple pathways to clearinghouse data, including a library of existing map and data summary products, Internet-based interactive access to geospatial data, and access to raw geospatial and related attribute data for use by GIS professionals. Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS recently implemented a multi-tiered approach to serving information – tier 1 for non-technical users needing access to pre-formatted maps of various data themes; tier 2 providing on-line interactive mapping and queries for selected geographic areas; and tier 3 offering GIS and IT professionals direct access to a multitude of datasets.

Develop/maintain the hardware/software environment to provide full time access to clearinghouse data, with down time at a level acceptable to users. Time Frame: Ongoing.

NRIS could not accomplish its mission without the hardware and software that has become the electronic books and shelves of the library. Through a combination of limited core funding and funding obtained through agreements with partner agencies, NRIS has contributed significantly to the implementation of a high-quality data center at MSL.

Challenge: Our ability to maintain this high-quality data center has not kept pace with our growing reliance on the center to accomplish our mission. Core funding alone is not adequate, and must therefore be supplemented through agreements with partner agencies.

Issue 3: NRIS core funding is inadequate to fully accomplish its mission as described under Issues 1 and 2.

Needs Assessment Summary: NRIS currently receives funding for six FTE through legislative appropriation. The ability for NRIS to accomplish its mission using a staff of six is limited because (a) data assimilation/dissemination demands are greater than can be met with a staff of six and (b) it is difficult to obtain the necessary level of Internet, GIS and database technical expertise as well as natural resource knowledge within a staff of six. In order to maintain the necessary level of staff resources and staff expertise, NRIS must employ a staff of approximately ten persons, or four more than are currently provided for through core funding.

NRIS currently makes up the difference through contracts with state agencies and other users, who often have data access, display, and dissemination needs that cannot be met using their in-house resources. Through these contracts, NRIS is normally able to support its full complement of staff, as well as develop/refine datasets and develop new data access, display, and analysis tools that are then integrated into the general clearinghouse. However, work available through contracts is driven by project needs that are often not fully aligned with general clearinghouse needs; thus staff resource demands associated with general clearinghouse needs are sometimes diverted in response to contract demands. In addition, contract funding has proven to be unavailable at times, resulting in loss of staff and the subsequent difficulties associated with restaffing the program.

State funding accounts for only 60% of Heritage program's basic operations. This program, an integral part of NRIS services, needs to find stable and reliable funding for its core services.

In order for NRIS to fulfill its mission, a higher percentage of core funding is necessary. Legislative and executive branch policy makers must fully understand the benefits of the NRIS clearinghouse so that NRIS receives an appropriate portion of the funding available to support information technology resources.

Goal #25: In order to fulfill its mandate as described under Issues 1 and 2, NRIS must secure adequate and stable funding.

LSTA Purpose: No LSTA funds are used for NRIS.

Key Output Targets:

1. Clearly define the role of NRIS, its relationship with state agency programs, and its relationship with other clearinghouses.

The role of NRIS as outlined in this strategic plan is well accepted by state and federal agencies as evidenced by the fact that agencies utilize NRIS to disseminate agency data. Regarding the Montana GIS Enterprise, MSL and ITSD have jointly identified an essential role of NRIS as the primary point of access to geospatial data in Montana. NRIS maintains a close relationship with the only other clearinghouse in the state, the Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC), serving as a point of access for CEIC data and linking users directly to CEIC resources.

2. Inform and educate executive and legislative branch policy makers of the benefits of NRIS.

We are eager to share information on the successes and challenges of NRIS with officials in the executive and legislative branches, and welcome opportunities to do so.

3. Develop contracts with agencies at a level that supports staff not funded through core funding, with a goal of maintaining stable funding for a staff of ten FTE.

Legislative appropriations do not fully support the staff necessary to carry out the NRIS mission. Additional staffing is supported by interagency agreements with other state and federal agencies to perform specific work contributing to NRIS' mission; it is through these

contracts that NRIS has been able to secure the current level of staffing and the breadth of expertise necessary.

Challenge: While interagency agreements provide critical support for NRIS staffing, most of that additional capacity is committed to specific projects and unavailable for “core functions”.

Key Outcome Targets:

1. Policy makers have a clear understanding of NRIS mission, the benefits of NRIS, and the overall cost savings to the state associated with the NRIS clearinghouse.

We believe that long-term agency leaders and multi-term legislators widely respect NRIS and regard it as an essential MSL program. However, there is an ongoing need to ensure that new legislators and agency leaders are aware of the success and benefits of NRIS in order to maximize and sustain the benefits of this investment. Additional outreach is necessary to ensure this goal is met.

2. NRIS receives increased core funding each biennium until NRIS is no longer dependent on contract funding, with a goal of replacing contract funding with core funding for one additional FTE each biennium.

In recognition of the state of the economy, NRIS has not included additional FTE in its budget requests for the past two legislative sessions. This has posed very difficult challenges for the agency in maintaining and continuing to develop NRIS’ services. A review of funding needs and staffing needs will be required in the near future for Montana to continue to sustain the benefits of this program.

3. NRIS is able to maintain the broad range of staff expertise necessary to fulfill its clearinghouse mandate.

It has become increasingly difficult to hire and retain qualified staff due to intense competition for IT staff. NRIS has lost several valuable staff to other agencies and to the private sector, where significantly higher salaries are available.

4. NRIS is able to concentrate on developing/refining statewide or regional datasets of use to a broad range of NRIS users.

In addition to supporting the assimilation of datasets and development of data access tools, NRIS’ core funding must help secure and support a growing IT infrastructure – our electronic books and shelves. NRIS staff positions are therefore funded in significant part by

interagency agreements, resulting in project-specific obligations that often keep NRIS staff from their core functions. Although our record is good in terms of acquiring information and providing access, much remains to be done that will require dedicated funding and staffing.

5. NRIS is able to develop/refine data access, display, and interpretation tools of use to a broad range of NRIS users. ***See response above.***
6. Montana experiences an overall savings in the cost of products and services related to access and use of natural resource data.

Even in the face of major funding and staffing challenges, we believe that NRIS has continued to provide major cost savings and other benefits to Montana by providing – and improving – access to essential information and avoiding duplication of effort.

7. All NRIS users benefit from the additional staff expertise, additional data, better data access, and display and interpretation tools made available through the NRIS clearinghouse.

Programs:

Improve education and outreach. Clearly define the role of NRIS in the information and GIS community and communicate that role effectively to users and policy makers. Time frame: Ongoing.

Develop supplemental (contract) funding. Develop contracts with state agencies and other NRIS users to provide data acquisition, development, management, and dissemination support, and applications development services. Seek contracts related to providing or improving access to natural resource and related data, beyond the products and services provided through core funding. Time Frame: Ongoing.

See responses above.

Explore changes in the contract relationship between MSL and the Nature Conservancy (TNC) with the Nature Conservancy and the staff of the Heritage Program. Time Frame: 2003.

A thorough alternatives assessment has been conducted, with partner input, and a report is in being finalized that will identify options and make recommendations for future management of the Natural Heritage Program. The preferred option will likely require no change in statute; the intent is that the program will remain part of the State Library and NRIS, with no change or loss in functions, services, or staffing.

Continue to inform and educate the executive and legislative branch on NRIS' value to state services and seek additional funding for core services. Time frame: Ongoing.

As stated above, we are eager to share information on the successes and challenges of NRIS with officials in the executive and legislative branches, and welcome opportunities to do so.